

VZCZCXYZ0002
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #0857 0881325
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 281325Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7359
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2446
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1151

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 000857

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA CONCERNED POLITICS UNDERCUTS PAKISTANI
TERRORISM FIGHT; ASSISTANCE UNLIKELY

REF: STATE 29860

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: Russia is concerned that Pakistan's new coalition government will fail to aggressively pursue Islamic extremists. MFA observers lament the diminished influence of Musharraf, Russia's preferred Pakistani leader, and hope that he could make a comeback if a new government comes to power. While the GOR continues to back U.S. support for Pakistan and its fight against terrorism, Russian concern over ties with India will keep the GOR from providing any kind of assistance or aid (reftel), or making substantive changes in its current, low-level relationship with Pakistan. End summary.

Russia Unlikely to Aid Pakistan

12. (C) In response to reftel request, according to the MFA, Russia does not provide Pakistan security or development assistance, and counter-terrorism cooperation is limited to annual meetings that consist of little more than an exchange of ideas. The GOR is unlikely to begin providing assistance in light of recent parliamentary elections and the formation of a civilian-led government for fear of impairing relations with India.

GOR Questions New Government's Anti-Extremist Credentials

13. (C) MFA Pakistan Desk Chief Andrey Starkov told us that the GOR was concerned that the makeup of Pakistan's new coalition government would result in weakened resolve to fight Islamic extremists. MFA observers were disappointed that the coalition headed by Prime Minister Gillani did not include Musharraf's parliamentary allies. The MFA told us Russia was concerned by the inclusion of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), since it believed its leader, Nawaz Sharif, maintained ties to Islamic extremists. It hoped Sharif's influence would be minimized and that "positive forces" in the government would prevail. Starkov expressed concern over reports that the Gillani government would pursue a more moderate course in dealing with Islamic extremists, stressing that "action, not dialogue" was necessary.

14. (C) Starkov thought it unfortunate that Pakistan's new political landscape had weakened Musharraf. He reiterated that the GOR preferred a strongman as the best means to control the nation's nuclear arsenal, which remained Russia's top priority in Pakistan. Starkov noted that Musharraf had four years in his presidential term, positing that he could regain influence if a new coalition government came to power that included his parliamentary allies.

Pakistan Should Welcome U.S. Role

15. (C) Starkov expressed irritation with Pakistan officials who reportedly criticized the recent visit of a high-level U.S. delegation to Islamabad at the same time that the new government was sworn in as evidence of American "meddling" in Pakistani affairs. He argued that Pakistan should recognize the visit as a demonstration of their country's importance to the U.S. and be "grateful" for U.S. attention and support. Starkov reiterated that despite Russian interest in Pakistan's political stability, the GOR could not become more involved in the situation owing to the importance it placed on maintaining ties with India. The U.S., on the other hand, was in a "unique position" that allowed it to play a key role in Pakistan at the same time it significantly improved ties with India.

BURNS